(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether seafarers' unions have strongly opposed this move;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether any of these has been discussed with the Union Government, so far; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Keeping in view the business dynamics and availability of qualified and competent manpower, the shipping companies all over world including some Indian companies often place their vessels for manning and management under the charge of competent and qualified managers in course of their business. The Shipping Corporation of India (SCI)'s decision is primarily actuated by the acute shortage of qualified and competent seafaring officers which in recent past has resulted in loss of trading days.

(c) and (d) The seafarer's unions namely Maritime Union of India (MUI), National Union of Seafarers of India (NUSI) and Forward Seamen's Union of India (FSUI) along with SCI Officers Association and SCI Staff Union Jointly opposed the notice issued by SCI inviting tenders for manning and technical management of 30 vessels. The Seafarer's Unions apprehend loss of job of the seafarer's as a result of placing the SCI vessels on manning and technical management. SCI Officers Association and SCI Staff Union alleged that the jobs of clerical/technical nature could not be outsourced under the agreement with the Staff Union. They also demanded stopping of the tendering process and convening a meeting with them.

A reply was sent by SCI to MUI, NUSI, FSUI, SCI Staff Union and the SCI Officers Association on February 8, 2008 explaining the rationable of the decision and assuring that there would be no loss of employment opportunities and the SCI management will completely abide by all subsisting agreements and settlements. It was also clarified that a settlement in relation to the shore staff that is non-seafaring personnel provided that only the clerical jobs which are of perennial nature would not be outsourced and that the contract would not in any manner run contrary to the said settlement. The Seafaring Unions were assured that in the event of manning and technical management being outsourced, the Seafarer's would continue to be employed. The management also had a meeting with the representatives of the Unions to address their concern and to assure them that in the event the vessels were outsourced, they would be taken into confidence.

(e) and (f) Government has been informed by the SCI about their decision.

Heritage route between Ahmedabad and Dandi

1505. SHRI JAYANTILAL BAROT:
SHRI KANJIBHAI PATEL:
SHRI SURENDRA MOTILAL PATEL:

Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the planning of Government for the improvement of 'heritage route' between Ahmedabad and Dandi;

(b) whether any separate budgetary provision has been allocated to NHAI for his work; and

(c) the time schedule for completion of the work?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIAPPA): (a) to (c) Development and improvement of Ahmedabad-Dandi Heritage Route (NH-228) having a length of 386 km has been planned to be taken up in two phases with the fund available from Gross Budgetary Support (GBS) through the State Government. In the first phase, improvement of riding surface, widening of carriageway wherever feasible, within the available Right of Way (ROW) are proposed to be taken up under the Annual Plan of the year 2008-09. In Phase-II, upgradation of road to two-lane with paved shoulders, construction of bridges, missing links, bypasses etc are proposed to be taken up. These works would be undertaken after finalization of Detailed Project Report (DPR). The tentative completion period of Phase-I works is about two years and for Phase-II works is about three to four years. There is no separate budget provision for the development of NH-228 at present.

Construction work of NH-57 in Bihar

†1506. SHRI MANGANI LAL MANDAL: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that construction work of East-West four-laned highway is proceeding very slowly;

(b) whether it is a fact that the construction work of NH-57 in Bihar is dissatisfactory and indifferent from the quality point of view and there is no possibility of commencement of bridge construction work over the Kosi, Bhutahi Balaan, Kamla and other rivers in the near future; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIAPPA): (a) Some projects under four-laning of highway in East-West Corridor are running behind the schedule.

(b) and (c) There is no comprise in the quality of work under NHDP programme. In order to ensure quality of work, NHAI has engaged supervision consultants (generally selected through International Competitive Bidding) for supervising quality of works by conducting periodic control checks to monitor the quality as per relevant technical specifications. As far as four-laning projects of NH-57 in Bihar under East-West Corridor is concerned, construction work has been a bit slow as this stretch (Muzaffarpur-Darbhanga-Forbesganj-Purnea) passes through difficult flood prone area. During July-August, 2007 unprecedented flood occurred in Muzaffarpur-Darbhanga area due to which existing carriageway was breached thus inflicting wide spread damages. The construction of bridge across river Kosi started in April 5, 2007. The construction work of bridge across river Kamla Balan has also started while that across river Bhutahi Balan has been delayed since the length of proposed bridge is to be increased along with some river training works. The length is being finalized as early as possible for which technical input is being taken from IIT, Kanpur.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi